

# THE EPPS HETEROSEXUAL SCALE AND MARITAL STATUS\*

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## PROBLEM

Users of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) <sup>(3)</sup> will note certain rather marked scale differences between the two standardization samples, college students and an adult general population of "household heads". For example, a raw score of 10 on the Heterosexual (Het) Scale places the college coed at the 24th percentile and the housewife at the 66th percentile. Since the social desirability ratings of the nine specific statements representing heterosexual needs were obtained from college students, the difference between normative groups may simply reflect differences in social or personal desirability of the items.

Several studies <sup>(1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7)</sup> have demonstrated the general effects of social desirability upon EPPS scores. However, cursory inspection suggests that personal desirability of certain Het scale items may specifically be a function of marital status, since the wording of five of the nine Het statements implies an interest in more than one person of the opposite sex, e.g. in the item, "I like to go out with attractive persons of the opposite sex." Such needs are socially approved and expected of the single person; the same behavior and needs in a married person constitute infidelity and are hardly socially approved. This raises a question about what is being measured in married Ss.

## METHOD

To test the possibility that the wording of the Het statements influences the social or personal desirability as a function of marital status, two forms were developed: (1) Original Form,<sup>1</sup> including all 31 EPPS items containing a statement representing Het needs, and (2) Altered Form, including the same 31 items except that the five statements possibly implying an interest in more than one person of the opposite sex were followed by the phrase: (or, if married, my spouse).

The test material was presented in four separate steps for all Ss: (1) Completing the Original Form in accordance with instructions paraphrasing those of the EPPS; (2) rating the Het and other need statements for social desirability on a 9-point scale similar to that used in development of the EPPS; (3) re-rating for social and personal desirability the five Het statements with the phrase, "or, if married, my spouse", added; (4) completing the Altered Form.

Two groups of Ss were used: (1) 97 single, sophomore student nurses, (2) 55 married women with mean age of 26.3 and education of 11.75 years, attending an obstetrical out-patient clinic. The married group was about 50% Negro and had been married an average of 68.4 months.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 indicates that the mean score on the Het Scale of the present sample of single students was 14.0, which is comparable to the 14.3 mean of the EPPS standardization sample. The married sample obtained a mean score of 7.9, which closely approximates the general adult mean of 8.1 in the standardization sample.

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<sup>1</sup>Edwards, Wright, and Lunnborg, *op. cit.*, have warned that items or scales taken out of context may be responded to differently; however, this did not seem to be the case with the single student nurses in this study, who were previously tested with the complete EPPS and achieved a Het Scale mean of 13.9, which is not significantly different from the 14.0 obtained with the present Original Scale.

TABLE 1. MEANS ON ORIGINAL (O) AND ALTERED (A) HETEROSEXUAL SCALE FORMS

| Sample                         | N  | Original Form |     | Altered Form |     | Diff. | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> |
|--------------------------------|----|---------------|-----|--------------|-----|-------|----------|----------|
|                                |    | Mean          | SD  | Mean         | SD  |       |          |          |
| Single                         | 97 | 14.0          | 5.6 | 16.7         | 4.9 | 2.7   | 6.73     | < .01    |
| Married                        | 55 | 7.9           | 5.1 | 13.7         | 7.1 | 5.8   | 7.53     | < .01    |
| Difference between differences |    |               |     |              |     | 3.1   | 5.34     | < .01    |

When comparing the scores on the Original and the reworded Altered Form, it is obvious that both groups increased their scores significantly on the Altered Form. However, the mean change was twice as great for the married sample as for the single students. About 90% of the married Ss increased their scores when the phrase "or, if married, your spouse" was added. The correlation between the Original and Altered Forms for the single students was .73, suggesting little differential impact of the altered wording upon the single group, since the correlation approaches the test-retest reliability. The correlation between forms was .55 for the married sample, indicating somewhat more variable influence of the rewording on the married group. Both the larger differences between forms and the lower correlations between forms for the married sample suggest that something different was being measured by the two forms in married subjects.

The mean social desirability ratings of the married sample were markedly lower than the single sample on the five Het items of the Original Form which might imply infidelity. This was in contrast to the groups' similar ratings of the remaining four unaltered Het items that do not imply infidelity, the five altered Het items with the phrase added, and the non-heterosexual need items.

While this study does not and did not intend to prove that married women have as strong Het needs as single women,<sup>2</sup> it does clearly show that certain Het statements on the EPPS are seen by the female "household heads" as being less socially desirable as compared with better educated, younger, single students. This helps account for their lower scores. Furthermore, the lower social desirability ratings of married women seem to be a function of the promiscuous connotations of the Het items rather than a reflection of differential interest in sex or heterosexual interpersonal relationships. The test user ought to bear in mind that the differences between married and unmarried subjects' scores are in large part semantically engendered artifacts.

#### SUMMARY

Two groups, one composed of single, sophomore student nurses and the other of married, OB patients were compared on the EPPS Heterosexual (Het) Scale using the statements as originally worded and again with the wording of five of the nine Het statements altered slightly to reduce the connotation to married subjects of promiscuous sexual interests. The two groups obtained very different scores on the Original Form, comparable to the respective standardization samples. It was hypothesized, and supported, that certain Het statements, because of the wording, would produce socially undesirable connotations, and, thus, lower scores in married women.

<sup>2</sup>Of course, this hypothesis is not testable with the EPPS because the forced choice format yields only relative, not absolute, strengths, and the Het statements are probably an inadequate sample of the possible modes of expressing or gratifying such needs, especially in married women, since complete coverage should include the need or desire to sexually arouse one's spouse, to engage in petting and foreplay, to have intercourse, etc.

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## USE OF THE EDWARDS PERSONAL PREFERENCE SCHEDULE WITH HOSPITALIZED ALCOHOLICS

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### PROBLEM

None of the few studies available in which the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) has been used with psychiatric populations are concerned with the alcoholic patient. This study compares the Edwards General Adult Sample scores with scores obtained from hospitalized male and female alcoholic groups to determine (1) whether the EPPS adequately differentiated a male and a female alcoholic group from Edwards' General Adult Male and Female Sample respectively; and (2) whether EPPS variables were related to the completion of an alcoholic treatment program and to readmission to a state hospital subsequent to discharge.

### METHOD

*Subjects.* Ss were 350 male and 100 female patients newly admitted to the Wyoming State Hospital who were participants in the Alcoholic Rehabilitation Program of the hospital and were diagnosed as Alcoholism Addiction, or Acute Brain Syndrome associated with alcoholism, or Personality Disorder associated with alcoholism.

Distribution of Ss according to age, IQ, and education is contained in Table 1.

TABLE 1. AGE, IQ AND EDUCATION OF ALCOHOLIC SUBJECTS

|        | Age   |        | IQ     |        | Education |        |
|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|--------|
|        | Male  | Female | Male   | Female | Male      | Female |
| Mean   | 43.4  | 42.0   | 99.0   | 98.3   | 10.4      | 11.2   |
| Median | 43.6  | 40.0   | 102.0  | 97.0   | 10.1      | 11.0   |
| Range  | 20-76 | 18-68  | 74-131 | 66-124 | 1-21      | 5-16   |

\*Now with Park County Counseling Service, Cody, Wyoming.